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**With All Eyes on You: Distantiation Through Multiple Perspectives
in *As I Lay Dying***

Senior Paper

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In the novel *As I Lay Dying* William Faulkner portrays the Bundrens, a Southern family that has decided to travel to Jefferson, Mississippi in order to bury their matriarch. On their journey they encounter many obstacles: flood, fire, and themselves. Throughout the Bundrens' trip to Jefferson they quarrel, fight, and argue with anyone and everyone, most dramatically themselves. As the novel progresses, it becomes increasingly apparent that the Bundrens are a highly dysfunctional family. There is an underlying feeling of distrust and even disgust amongst the family members. Although they "band together" in order to get their matriarch's body back to her hometown, they have selfish motives for doing so. The novel gives an account of the modern American family on the verge of collapse.

The story is told from the eyes of fifteen different narrators, seven are the Bundrens (Anse, Addie, Cash, Darl, Jewel, Dewey Dell, and Vardaman) while the other eight are made up of citizens from either the rural land or city (Vernon, Cora, Whitfield, Armstid, Peabody, Samson, Moseley, and Macgowan). Although novel centers on the Bundrens, the majority of the chapters are allotted to non-Bundren narrators. One of the main purposes of emphasizing non-family narrators is to create what this paper will refer to as distantiation. For the purpose of this analytical reading of the novel, distantiation will be defined as a distancing effect, which illuminates how different forms of space, whether they are geographical, social, or personal, play into lives of individuals. Faulkner creates a spread of narrators from rural to urban environments in order to show the decline of the Bundrens; therefore, exposing the reader to several different social perspectives. In order to emphasize the decline of the Bundrens, the reader will be exposed to two different social perspectives: the rural and the urban. With the narrators separated into categories it becomes apparent that each social group interacts and relates with the Bundrens on different levels. Through the lenses of these two contrasting social demographics Faulkner is

able to give a wider range of thoughts and perceptions. These perceptions reveal what ultimately makes it difficult for the Bundrens' to adapt the closer they get to the city of Jefferson.

Throughout the novel, Faulkner uses distantiation in a multitude of ways that all interact with one another; the application of multiple narrators and their relations between themselves (whether they are rural or city folk, related or outside the family); and the actual distance the Bundrens are in relation to the city; and how close the reader feels to the Bundrens depending on who is telling the story. Through the multifaceted use of distantiation Faulkner shows the intricacy of one poor family's struggle to pull together as a unit in the ever-changing modern world.

To understand why Faulkner would go to such great lengths to create a distancing effect, it is important to look at the context of when he was writing the novel (1930), and when the events in the novel take place (early 1920's). During the 1920's and 1930's America, and the South especially, was experiencing great changes in the societal, agricultural, and communal norms. Many authors, painters, and other artists focused on these changes that were sweeping the world, and in turn became known as Modernists. But this acknowledgement of a change in modernization was not limited to art. Other individuals who belonged to groups within the social sciences and beyond were also trying to discover what this age of modernity meant for society. Anthropologists, Andrei Simic and Glynn Custred, are among the many who were aware that these factors of modernization would play a significant role in the lives of Americans. In the article "Modernity and the American Family: A Cultural Dilemma," they argue that "the decline of the American family...stems from the dissonance between the cultural and instinctual imperatives associated with family life, on the one hand, and the fragmenting forces of modernity as expressed in a pervasive system of values stressing individualism, universalism,

and rationalism, on the other” (Simac and Custred 164). As modernity is a broad term and can be looked at in many different ways, it is through Simac and Custred’ lens that this essay strives to understand what exactly happens to the Bundrens as they leave their rural farm home in hopes of reaching the city of Jefferson. They define *modernity* as “the direction of change, and in particular to specify the nature of ‘progress’ and ‘modernization’” (169). Along with the definition of modernity, this essay will also borrow the assumption of “‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societies as dichotomous stereotypes” (170). With these terms defined, it is now possible to start dissecting the Bundrens’ journey from rural life to modernization as seen by the people who inhabit both atmospheres.

Cora Tull is one of the most prominent non-family members of the novel. She is only given three chapters of narration but within those chapters she exposes a substantial amount about the Bundrens and their day-to-day lives, both prior to and after the death of Addie. Not only is Cora a close neighbor of the Bundrens, she is also a local farmer’s wife, which puts her in the same class as the Bundrens. This closeness in social status allows Cora to look at the Bundrens in a more sympathetic light while also giving her character a different form of credibility compared to if she was of a higher class that would be more apt to judge the Bundrens. Like all of the novel’s narrators, Cora is used to show distantiation in multiple ways. First, although she is in the same social class and has similar agency to Addie, the Bundrens’ matriarch, she is not a Bundren. This creates a sense of separation from the events that surround the Bundrens’ lives. Because of this separation, Cora has the capacity to recall tragic events that happen to the Bundrens in a more objective manner. Although Cora remains in the same class as the Bundrens, she is still able to participate in the “judging” of the family. Due to her closeness in status, she does not judge the Bundrens based on their country ways; instead she looks at them

as individuals. William Handy addresses this intimacy in his article "*As I Lay Dying*: Faulkner's Inner Reporter." He states, "[Cora's] facile moral pronouncements become the ironic expression of some of the central meaning of the novel" (Handy 439).

Throughout Cora's sections it appears that her main focus is Addie. During Addie's death scene, Cora begins to relay how she feels about Addie, especially in the realms of faith, religion, and duty. When looking upon the dying matriarch, Cora states, "But the eternal and everlasting salvation and grace is not upon her" (Faulkner 8). As the novel unfolds Cora's concern with the salvation of Addie becomes more apparent. It is Addie's lack of faith and Christian duty that Cora believes is at the heart of the Bundrens' downfall. Cora goes into grave detail on this matter in her final chapter of narration. In this chapter, Addie and Cora discuss the meaning of salvation. When Addie reveals that her son Jewel, who was born out of wedlock, is her savior, Cora believes that Addie has committed an act of blasphemy and responds, "There is your sin. And your punishment too. Jewel is your punishment. But where is your salvation?" (168). Addie again reiterates that Jewel is her Savior, to which Cora recalls, "I prayed for that poor blind woman as I had never prayed for me and mine" (168). Cora's judgment of Addie is often viewed as either comical or a form of bigotry; however, there has been recent arguments that Cora's role is more than these two components. Southern Lit critic John Basset claims that Cora is a "foil" to Addie, and even though she might go about her criticism of the matriarch in an unflattering way, she still serves to show the faults that Addie displays (Basset 125). Through this interpretation of Cora, she is given more agency in comparison to many other readings of her sections.

Having extended Cora's credibility beyond just the typical religious bigot, it becomes possible to extend her judgments of Addie's fault. Cora relates Addie's lack of "duty" to

selfishness, a trait she believes is apparent in all the Bundrens. This inherent selfishness that plagues the Bundrens is essentially what Cora believes contributes to their inability to thrive as a family. She sees this defect in all of the Bundrens with the exception of Darl, the second born son, who, as the novel progresses, and they get closer to the city, ends up showing some of his own selfishness. Some scholars, such as Walter Everett, say that due to Cora's inability to notice Darl's selfishness is what makes her an unreliable character (Everett 10). However, it can also be argued that her own faults and lack of knowing Darl's intentions is Faulkner's way of giving her verisimilitude. If Cora was all knowing, and a total encompassing of what is "right" or "wrong" then the rest of the novel's narrators would be obsolete. Even though Cora misreads Darl's personal motives, she still gives insight into the rural view of the Bundrens; she states, "It was Darl, the one that folks say is queer, lazy, pottering about the place" (24). Cora also uses the nature of Darl to illuminate the shortcomings of the rest of the Bundrens. For example, she makes a comment on Darl's love for his mother; although the reader knows he is not driven by love, but to show the selfishness of the Anse, the father. Cora uses the scene of Anse sending his son away from his dying mother in order to make three dollars as a prime example of the selfishness of the Bundrens (21). As Cora misreads Darl's intentions, the credibility of her statement about Anse is weakened; Faulkner then extends her comparisons to the other Bundrens who are more obviously selfish.

Although Cora is critical of all the Bundrens, she tends to devote the majority of her animosity toward Jewel, the middle son, who Addie places all of her sanctimony in. Because of Addie's decision to place her faith and love in Jewel, rather than distribute her love equally among the children, or to God, he becomes more susceptible to Cora's criticism. Jewel's decision to leave his mother's deathbed in order to collect three dollars, is to Cora, the ultimate

example of his selfishness. Where she misconstrued Darl's actions in order to contrast the rest of the family, she appropriately uses Jewel's actions to show comparison. Through Jewel's decision to leave she calls him a "Bundren through and through, loving nobody, caring for nothing except how to get something with the least amount of work" (22). Cora makes a series of connections between the selfishness of Jewel and Anse. She believes they both hold the same set of values, or lack thereof, especially when it comes to the death of Addie. When looking at these connections she again takes the role of the "chorus" for the rural people by saying that "nobody that knows Anse could have expected different" (22). She even claims this to be true of two youngest children, Dewey Dell, who is seventeen, and Vardaman, who is not yet ten years old. When discussing the children with her husband, Vernon Tull, Cora states, "with even that little one almost old enough now to be selfish and stone-hearted like the rest of them" (23). These vices, in combination with Addie's own selfishness, are what Cora sees as the fatal flaw of the Bundrens. It is because of these character defects that Cora claims that Addie is "dying alone, hiding her pride and her broken heart. Glad to go" (23).

Cora's role as a narrator of the Bundren tale then, is one that is simultaneously objective and subjective, a dichotomy Faulkner manages by having a non-family member who is still emotionally connected to them. One aspect that makes Cora's view of the Bundrens so insightful is her sense of Christian Duty to Addie and her children. She truly believes that it is God's will for her to help the Bundrens' (especially Addie) see the wickedness of their ways in order to repent before it is too late. Cora's duty to her neighbors also creates reliability in her narrations. Because Cora is such a busy body, it is easy to believe that she will always know what is going on with the people within the town, and since she is always concerned with the lives of others, it makes her statements of what the townspeople say and think more reasonable; however, because

of her own misinterpretations she can not be held as the all-knowing narrator that she believes she is, therefore, it becomes increasingly important to see how her “stories” correlate with the remainder of the non-family narrators.

Vernon Tull, Cora’s husband, also gives insight into how the Bundrens interact with one another and others outside the family. Along with Cora, Vernon is closest to the Bundrens in nearly every way. He is in the same class as them, and also lives nearest to them, therefore, it is understood that he would be slightly more compassionate for them. All together, Vernon is the most sympathetic of all the non-family narrators, even more so than his wife. Although he still relays many of the Bundrens’ faults, he does it in the most objective and understanding manner. Vernon’s compassion for the Bundrens can first be seen in how he speaks of poor women by claiming, “it’s a hard life on women, for a fact” (30). Vernon then extends this to Addie in particular as she is dying but as he does so he also reveals some of Anse’s laziness. He states, “she kept him at work for thirty-odd years. I reckon she is tired” (33). This statement is complex because Vernon is being understanding of Addie while also being critical of Anse. In this view, Vernon is claiming that Addie’s death is contributed to Anse’s inability to work for himself. This statement echoes Cora’s view of the Bundren selfishness, yet it is more forgiving of Addie’s part in the situation. It is interesting how Cora, a mother herself, is more likely to see Addie’s faults in comparison to Vernon, a father, who only sees the faults of the Bundren patriarch. This one particular statement shows how distantiation differs even amongst husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, all who are in the same class.

The source of Cora and Vernon’s differences lie in Cora’s religiosity. Vernon does not share the same view of “Christian duty” as Cora and therefore approaches his interactions with the Bundrens in a different manner. Scholar Vickery Olga explains this separation between

Vernon and Cora as Vernon being a moral judgment and Cora being an ethical one (Olga 246). Since he does not feel obligated to save or change them he is more capable of showing empathy and compassion. Although Vernon still shows their absurdity, it is clear that he is the most compassionate towards the Bundrens. In one of his chapters of narration Vernon gives his opinion on judgment from both people and God. He states, "If it's a judgment, it aint right. Because the Lord's got more to do than that" and "Because the only burden Anse Bundren's ever had is himself. And when folks talks him low, I think to myself he aint that less of a man or he couldn't a bore himself this long" (73). As when discussing Anse and Addie's relationship, Vernon illuminates their faults; in this case Anse being his own burden, yet he also shows compassion by stating that since Anse has survived the rough times of living a rural life he must have some redeeming qualities. Vernon contradicts the popular opinion of Anse as totally worthless even though Vernon is aware that he lacks certain work ethics. This empathy stems from the fact that Vernon is also a farmer and therefore understands the difficulty of being a poor laborer. Vernon's empathy is a trait that is later shown to be non-existent in the townspeople, because they do not live in rural areas; a distinction that further reveals their class differences.

The idea of work ethic is something that is of the utmost importance to Vernon. He is compassionate towards the Bundrens in every aspect with the exception of their laziness. In his first chapter Vernon attributes this laziness to Anse by stating, "He puts his shoes on...like he does everything, like he is hoping all the time he really cant do it" (32). In this one line Vernon is able to sum up the essence of Anse's laziness; his statement "Like he does everything," shows that laziness is an integral part of Anse's character. Since Vernon has known Anse and is the closest person to him it is reasonable to accept his statement about him. But Anse is not the only Bundren that Vernon extends the sense of laziness to. He is also critical of Darl in this area.

Again, Vernon is subtle in this manner because he is making a general statement about what makes a good man is doing a day's work and avoiding overthinking but at the end of it he slips in "I have said and I say it again, that's ever living thing the matter with Darl," meaning that Darl spends too much time thinking and not enough working (71). Vernon believes that if Darl would spend more time working rather than "loafing" he would be better suited for the world. Where Vernon is sympathetic of the Bundrens in many areas, he is adamant in the critique of their selfishness and laziness. Vernon attributes this selfishness to the whole family in the scene where they are trying to get Addie's coffin across the river. He narrates, "They [the Bundrens] would risk the fire and the earth and the water and all just to eat a sack of bananas" (140). This claim is intriguing in a few ways. First, he has summed up the Bundrens in one line. When questioned about *As I Lay Dying* Faulkner is quoted as saying, "I took this family and subjected them to the two greatest catastrophes which man can suffer—flood and fire" (qtd. in Blotner 249). Vernon's statement also provides foreshadowing, as the Bundrens have not yet been subjected to the fire of the burning barn.

Faulkner constructs Vernon's character and chapters of narrations in a manner that covers a multitude of purposes. Most obviously to give an intimate look at the Bundrens that many of the other character/narrators are not able to give. But Faulkner also uses Vernon, like Cora, but in a more complex way, as an insight into the feelings of the rural folks. Where Cora's narrations serve as a Greek chorus in the sense that she makes general statements about how the fellow farmers feel about the Bundrens, Vernon's narration brings direct dialogue from many of the local peoples. In Vernon's account of Addie's wake he relays the dialogue of the local farmers as they discuss the Bundrens. Here it is seen how critical the locals are of the Bundrens, Anse in particular. Vernon quotes one farmer, Uncle Billy, as saying, "It's like a man that's let

everything slide all his life to get set on something that will make the most trouble for everybody he knows” (Faulkner 89). The farmers also discuss amongst themselves how Anse has relied on all of them and God to get everything done for him (89). In these short spurts of dialogue between the farmers Vernon shows how the Bundren selfishness is a consensus within the community. It is no longer interpreted as a few individuals’ beliefs about the family but rather as a truth about the Bundrens. Through both Vernon and Cora’s account of the Bundrens, Faulkner shows how the family is perceived by those who are closest to them. Here we are able to see what Simac and Custred mean by the “folk society” through which they claim members experience “a high level of commonality and empathy due to the homogeneity of their culture and the unity of their consciousness” (170). This “commonality” and “empathy” are most visible in Vernon’s section due to his closeness in class to the Bundrens. Once the Bundrens begin their journey toward urbanization both these qualities become less and less apparent.

Aside from the Tull’s, Faulkner gives two other famers’ accounts of the Bundrens: Samson and Armstid. Even though these narrators do not have multiple or even large sections they still bring something new to the narrative. What makes their narratives so interesting is that while they are still farmers, they are not as rural as the Bundrens or the Tulls. They live closer to the town of Mottson and therefore further the effect of distantiation. Both Samson and Armstid take the Bundrens in during the evenings of their journey. During these two nights the reader is exposed to how the Bundrens interact with others, and how those they interact with perceive their actions. Samson, who is closer than Armstid in geographical distance, is the first to allow the Bundrens to stay on his farm.

Faulkner uses Samson’s section to give insight into how people on the outer circle of the Bundrens’ world view their bizarre behavior. A disconnect between the Bundrens and Samson

and neighbors is visible from the moment the Bundrens pull up. Samson recounts the Bundrens arrival and how they had something in their wagon, yet one of his neighbors had been to the funeral three days prior so none of them could believe that the Bundrens would be carrying Addie's coffin (113). From this first interaction between the Bundrens and Samson there is already more conflict. Since Samson is further away from the Bundrens geographically he is not as familiar with their antics as the Tulls are, therefore, he is less understanding of why the Bundrens would drag a four-day-old corpse across the country. After a discussion with his wife, who is utterly appalled by the Bundrens behavior, Samson decides to confront the Bundrens about the corpse in the back of the wagon but he is only met with Anse's stubbornness. Samson is perplexed by Anse's refusal to heed his quest despite weather and all sorts of odds against him. For Samson it seems out of character for Anse to be motivated to do anything at all. He narrates, "I notice how it takes a lazy man, a man that hates moving, to get set on moving once he does get started off, the same as he was stating still, like it aint the moving he hates so much as the starting and the stopping" (114). Where Anse is often seen as simply lazy this line brings a new element to his character. It shows that he is more driven by some sort of self-will rather than simply by laziness. When Anse was on his own farm he was lazy because that was what he desired but now that he has a new desire he has become quite adamant about his quest. As Simac and Custred claim in their article on modernity and the family, the closer one gets to the modern world, the more they develop selfish desires. This is how the idea of the family and being part of a group is overcome by "individual well being" and "emotional fulfillment" (Simac and Custred 169). Samson is able to pick up on this through the Bundrens' actions. He believes that by now they should be over "that sort of foolishness" and show more respect for Addie's decaying corpse by burying it rather than dragging it all around (Faulkner 116). Although he never

outright states it, he gestures at the Bundrens having ulterior motives for getting to Jefferson, because if they were just trying to honor Addie they would simply have her buried with their own people. Samson notices this when he tries to talk to Anse about the body and Dewey Dell (the daughter) interferes. During this scene a distantiation can be seen between Samson and Dewey Dell. When Samson confronts the family he says she began to glare at him and “if her eyes had been pistols, I wouldn’t be talking now” (115). It is as if Dewey Dell sensed that Samson is an outsider and therefore does not have the best interest of the family at heart. Dewey Dell’s feeling of distantiation extends to the rest of the family. Samson repeatedly invites them to stay in the house and they continually decline his offer. The Bundrens’ decision to separate themselves from Samson shows how they feel they do not belong, their desire to physically separate themselves is analogous to the alienation they feel as a part of a different social group. Anse claims it is because he wouldn’t want to begrudge anyone, but we know this to be false because of Anse’s laziness and his reliance upon others to do his work for him (Faulkner 115). It is not the offering that Anse is refusing but who is offering it. As the novel unfolds it becomes apparent that the closer the Bundrens get to Jefferson the less apt they are to accept help. Samson acknowledges this on his part as well because even after allowing them to stay in his barn and offering them food for themselves and their mules and horses, he still claims, “if I had my rathers, you wouldn’t be here a-tall” (116). Through Samson and the Bundrens reactions toward one another it is possible to see how distantiation is taking place throughout the Bundrens’ journey.

Like Samson and Rachel, Armstid and his wife Lula put the Bundrens up on the second night of their trip. The events that Armstid recount are almost parallel to that of Samson. He offers the Bundrens a place to stay in his house along with some hot meals, yet, like with

Samson, they decline both and decide on sleeping in the barn. After their refusal, Armstid takes a basket of food out to them in the barn, which they also refuse (Faulkner 192). Armstid is baffled by their refusal because at this point in the novel the Bundrens are even more ramshackle, since the flooded river has destroyed their wagon and team of mules. The distastefulness between Armstid and Anse can be seen when they are discussing what the Bundrens can do about the loss of their team. Armstid relays their discussion, as Anse was “looking at me like it was me that owned the only span of mules in the country and wouldn’t sell them to him” (*sic* 184). What makes the interaction between the men so complex is that Armstid offers his team to Anse to borrow, yet Anse refuses it claiming that, “[Addie’s corpse will] want to go in ourn” (185). Again it is apparent that this refusal of help is a stand against the disconnect he feels in others who are not close to him. Some may argue that it is because Anse does not want to receive help from anyone he is not related to, but this argument loses its credibility because the Bundrens were willing to ask Vernon for use of his team when they had crossed the river (127). It is because of this that one could see that the Bundrens separate Armstid from their neighbors.

Along with furthering the distastefulness between the Bundrens and other farmers, Armstid’s section provides another critical view of the American family within the novel. He shows how the family itself begins to fall apart the closer they get to Jefferson. Before Armstid’s section, the Bundrens argued and bickered but they still worked together when it came to completing their journey. In Armstid’s section the internal strife between the family members begins to rise. This is most noticeable in Anse’s decision to take Cash’s (the eldest son) tool money and Jewel’s beloved horse in order to buy a new team rather than borrow Armstid’s. Armstid’s narration shows how the Bundrens begin to truly fall apart through the actions of their father. Even though their motives for getting to Jefferson may have been selfish all along, it is

here that their actions began to compromise one another. Anse's decision to sell the horse and steal Cash's money show that he is acting on his own will rather than out of the best of the family. With the loss of his wagon he sees that his chances to make it to Jefferson are slimming, so rather than discussing options with his family he makes a decision that is based out of his own self-interest. Again this mirrors the ideas found throughout Simac and Custred article. The closer the Bundrens get to town, the more they each began to act out of self-will. They are no longer concerned with the interests of the *family*, but rather what they can do to get what they *individually* want. It is important that Faulkner uses Armstid to acknowledge this rather than one of the Bundrens. If Faulkner had chosen one of the Bundrens to tell this event, the credibility would be susceptible to the narrator's emotions. With the use of Armstid, this critique of the family becomes less biased. Also, as Armstid does not know the individual desires of each Bundren, he is able to tell the event more objectively than giving his interpretation of it. However, Armstid is able to pick up on the dissatisfaction of Bundren children. He sees how they are angry about Anse's decision and he tries to sympathize with their frustrations. Armstid shows special sympathy for Jewel. When he tells of how Jewel runs off he claims, "And I be durn if I could blame him. Not for wanting to not give up his horse, but getting shut of such a durn fool as Anse" (192). Armstid brings attention to the manipulation of Anse. He knows that Anse's selfishness affects not only his family, but also everyone he comes in contact with. At the end of the Bundrens' day on his land he shares Samson's sentiments. When talking about helping the Bundrens he claims he'd, "Be durn if there aint something about a durn fellow like Anse that seems to make a man have to help him, even when he knows he'll be wanting to kick himself the next minute" (192). This shows that even though Armstid is willing to help the Bundrens he is resentful of it. His willingness to help can be attributed to the fact that he is still a farmer and

therefore feels akin to the Bundrens. As for the next narrators, which are not farmers, it is apparent that this “brotherhood” and sense of duty to the Bundrens is nowhere to be found.

The doctor, Peabody, brings a new level of distantiation to the novel due to his occupation. For starters he is closer to the town of Mottson than the Bundrens, and therefore distanced in the physical geography; however, Peabody is still a “rural” doctor. The next factor of distantiation with Peabody is his occupation. Since he is a doctor it is obvious that he does not share the same class as the Bundrens. Throughout the novel he is only given two sections, one before the Bundrens begin their journey and one when they are close to finishing it. In these two sections Peabody shows how he perceives and interprets the Bundrens and their wild antics. In first two lines of narrations Peabody makes some interesting statements about Addie and Anse. Addie is on her deathbed and when Peabody receives the message to come out he claims that Anse must have, “wore her out at last” (41). By stating this he adds to the general consensus about Anse’s laziness but this time it has come from a social class above Anse rather than from his fellow farmers. Throughout his first chapter he repeatedly remarks on how Anse’s laziness and selfishness has caused him to wait far too long for there to be any help for Addie. He even alludes to the fact that Anse didn’t call him early to save money (44). Even though he is from a higher class this statement is nothing to special since time and time again Anse’s laziness has been brought to the forefront. What Peabody does next, however, brings a new element to the story. He contemplates not going out to the Bundrens because he believes there might be something he can do to save Addie (41). The reason Peabody is hesitant about bringing Addie back to health is not because he hates her, but rather because he thinks she would be better off dead than to go on with the rest of the Bundrens. He calls it having “fools ethic” in order to let her pass. Now this statement, despite his good intentions, is still an extreme one. It is easy to see

how differs from the way the previous narrators have looked at the Bundrens' situation. Because Peabody is doctor he is capable of looking at the Bundrens in a different light from the narrators who are not doctors. Although he feels a "civic duty" because of his occupation, he does not feel the "Christian duty" of the farmers. This causes him to be another step beyond in the realm of distantiation. Peabody also acknowledges the geographical distance between himself and the Bundrens. While he is on his way out to the Bundrens' farm he constantly complains about them living on a hill. He also remarks that Anse has not been to town in twelve years (42). This directly shows how far the Bundrens are removed from society. It is hinting at the fact that if they had been to town more frequently than during their journey, the town and city wouldn't have had such an impact on them.

In Peabody's second section, that takes place toward the end of the novel, he has become even more critical of the Bundrens. He is given the task of trying to repair Cash's leg which has been broken and then set with cement. Once Peabody is presented with Cash in this state he is furious, especially at Anse. The whole chapter is only two pages of dialogue between Cash and Peabody, yet it is here that Peabody reveals his true feelings about Anse. Peabody makes an interesting point when discussing what happened to Cash's leg. Cash claims that, "It never bothered me much;" to which Peabody retorts, "You mean it never bothered Anse much" (240). This is one of the few times in the novel where the non-family narrators directly talk to a Bundren about how they see them. Before, when talking about the Bundrens, most of the outside narrators would either talk to themselves via interior monologues or amongst other non-family members. Peabody has become so flustered with the actions of Anse that he takes his frustrations out on another Bundren. His animosity rises again when he hears that Anse had to borrow a spade in order to dig the hole. He says to Cash, "Of course he'd have to borrow a spade to bury

his wife with. Unless he could borrow a hole in the ground. Too bad you all didn't put him in it too'" (240). He also tells Cash that the whole Bundren family would be "cured" if they stuck Anse's head in a saw (240). In these last two statements from Peabody it is apparent that he can no longer tolerate Anse, nor pity the rest of the Bundrens for following him. One thing worth noting is that at this point the Bundrens are in the town of Mottson, where Peabody resides. It is interesting that Peabody is much less forgiving of the Bundrens while they are in town compared to when he visited them on their farm. Faulkner appears to be trying to show something about the Bundrens being out of their place. Even though the Bundrens have done some despicable things since they left, none of them seem any worse than waiting too late to call a doctor for their dying matriarch in order to save money. It more so is a statement about how their absurd antics are more tolerated in the rural ran than they are in the town.

Another narrator who is not quite a city dweller, yet retains his distantiation from the Bundrens is Whitfield, the country pastor. Whitfield's section is a hard one to analyze because unlike the other narrators, whose credibility seems intact, Whitfield is explicitly a hypocrite. Due to this blatant hypocrisy it is more difficult to look at him with any credibility. However, seeing as Faulkner chose to include his chapter, it is still important to look at how it effects the novel in the realm of distantiation. Scholar Joseph Reed tries to pinpoint the place of Whitfield in his book *Faulkner's Narrative*. He claims that he falls alongside the Tulls and somewhere in between the Bundrens and the remainder of the narrators, calling their place "almost them," with the "them" referencing the Bundrens (Reed 87). The reason Reed places Whitfield closer to the Bundrens than Armstid and Samson is because Whitfield had an intimate relationship with Addie. Because of Addie and Whitfield's affair he is able to at least appear closer to the Bundrens in his own eyes. But like Peabody, Whitfield is not in the same class as the Bundrens

due to his occupation. Although he is close geographically and intimately (if you choose to call it that), he is still a Pastor, which makes him a “man of God,” and therefore separate from intimate interaction. The reader is able to see the hypocrisy in this, as is Addie, but for the rest of the characters Whitfield still appears to be a reverend man. These inconsistencies in his actual character versus how he is perceived by the townspeople make his section one of the most complex in the novel.

One of the reasons it is so hard to read Whitfield’s interpretation of the Bundrens is because of how little he actually cares about them. Although his section is almost entirely interior monologue about how he is going to confess his sin to Anse, it is still entirely centered on Whitfield himself rather than the Bundrens. To determine Whitfield’s feelings toward the Bundrens it is essential to look at his actions rather than his words. For starters he has had an affair with Addie, and left her to bear his child with Anse. He uses his “sanctity” to lure in Addie only to abandon her. This act alone shows how little agency Whitfield extends to the Bundrens. If Whitfield held the Bundrens in more respect, then he would have not have taken advantage of Addie and been so disrespectful of Anse. Whitfield’s true character can be seen in the end of his section when he discovers that Addie has already passed by the time he makes it to the house. As soon as he realizes he is clear of Addie’s testimony he changes his mind about confessing his sins against Anse and justifies it as God’s Will (Faulkner 179). This act alone shows how little Whitfield really cares for the Bundrens. It could be argued that Whitfield is actually the cruelest of all narrators in the novel because where the others point out the short comings of the Bundrens, they are still willing to help them, yet Whitfield claims that he is trying to make things right yet continually disregards them. Whitfield’s hypocrisy climaxes in the last line of his

section. Upon walking into the house he says, ““God’s grave upon this house,”” which can easily be interpreted as the “grace” of him not having to reveal his sins to the family (179).

Moseley is the first narrator that is introduced that supplies distance from the Bundrens on all levels: he is from the town of Mottson so he is not close to the Bundrens geographically, his occupation is as a pharmacist so he resides in a higher social class, and until the Bundrens arrive in Mottson he has never seen nor heard of them before so he has no emotional or intimate ties with them. It is under these three forms of distantiation that Moseley’s reactions to the Bundrens can be analyzed. Moseley first interaction with any of the family members is when Dewey Dell comes into his pharmacy. From Moseley’s first impression of her it is clear that he views her as an outsider. When she enters he describes her as a “barefooted...stranger” who was probably looking to buy “a bottle of nigger toilet water” (199). Once Moseley begins to interact with Dewey Dell he becomes even more suspicious of her. Moseley’s account of their interaction brings new elements to how the distantiation creates different perspectives. In his account Dewey Dell is hardly able to speak. She uses fragmented sentences and answers open-ended questions with a yes or a no. Moseley puts far more distinction on her vernacular than the narrators of previous sections. One example in particular is Moseley quoting her as saying “I’d liefer to go back there” in the place of “I’d like to go back there” (200). Some say that this is just an inconsistency in Faulkner’s writing but scholar Stephen Ross argues against that belief in his essay “‘Voice’ In Narrative Texts: The Example in *As I Lay Dying*.” He argues that the “townspeople” (in this case Moseley) often attribute more extreme vernaculars to the Bundrens in comparison to that of “farm people” to show a contrast in the different classes of the narrators (Ross 302). When looking at the difference of vernacular as an intentional distinguishing of

voice it is clear to see that Faulkner was trying to create distance between the Bundrens and the people of Mottson.

At the beginning of Moseley's interaction with Dewey Dell he is quite sympathetic. He claims you "have to humor them" because they really don't know any better (200). But once he learns that Dewey Dell has come to see him in order to receive an abortion his demeanor with her quickly changes. He is outraged at the fact that she would even consider him as someone who would perform such an act. Upon her insistence he tells her, "Me, a respectable druggist, that's kept store and raised a family and been a church-member for fifty-six years in this town. I'm a good mind to tell your folks myself, if I just find out who they are" (202). Faulkner accomplishes a few things with this statement from Moseley. First it allows Moseley to show how his status is above Dewey Dell's. His claim to be a "respectable druggist" lets her know that he is a respected member of the community and not some "backwoods" doctor. Secondly he uses his church membership as a moral high ground. Lastly, he threatens to tell Dewey Dell's parents which jeopardizes her secret as well as makes a statement about the parenting she has received. All three of these factors create distance between the two characters. However, after Moseley has convinced Dewey Dell that he will not help her he does show a little bit of compassion. He states before she leaves, "But it's a hard life they [poor people] have" (202). Although this statement shows sympathy, it could also be read as patronizing. As if Moseley has pity for Dewey Dell because of her social class rather than being understanding of her situation.

Aside from the interaction with Dewey Dell, Moseley's section shows another aspect of distance with the Bundrens. Much like the Tulls' relayed the feelings of the rural people, Moseley gives insight into how the people of Mottson feel about the Bundrens. Faulkner uses Moseley to inform the reader of stories about the Bundrens he accumulated from other

townspeople. According to Moseley's tale the people of Mottson are outraged by the Bundrens' actions. They are not the least bit understanding of the Bundrens' situation. They are so appalled that they have the Sheriff of Mottson confront them and ask them to leave. The sheriff threatens Anse with jail if he doesn't get the rotting corpse out of town. Anse argues that they "never aimed to bother nobody," but the sheriff claims they are "endangering public health" (204). Again Ross's theory on vernacular is apparent. There is an obvious distinction between the sheriff and Anse's dialogue. After a bit of arguing the sheriff is finally able to run the Bundrens out of the town, leaving the people of Mottson baffled at the strange family who they felt had no business being there in the first place.

The final outside narrator to be introduced is MacGowan, a pharmacist assistant in the city of Jefferson. He is the only perspective we get from the people of the city itself. By the time the novel reaches MacGowan's section the family is in complete turmoil. Addie's corpse is around nine to ten days old, Darl has been betrayed by Dewey Dell and sent to a mental institution in Jackson, and Cash has almost lost his leg due to Anse's cheap "stint" job. MacGowan's character echoes that of Whitfield's in the sense that he pretends to help one of the Bundrens when really he is deceitful and selfish in his motives. When he and the other assistant, Jody, label her as soon as she walks in the door. They describe her as looking, "pretty good for a country girl" (242). The fact that they add the "country girl" shows that they are already distancing her from themselves. It is as if to say she wouldn't be as good looking if compared to the girls of the city. MacGowan furthers his distastefulness by taking advantage of her by lying about being the doctor. He assumes that since she is a "country girl" she would not be able to distinguish him from a real doctor. Like Moseley, he also patronizes her while asking what he can do for her. He uses Dewey Dell to generalize people from the country by stating,

“Half the time they don’t know what they want, and the balance of the time they cant tell it to you” (243). After MacGowan discovers what exactly it is that Dewey Dell is after he becomes even more corrupt. In short, he uses his social privilege over her to take advantage of her situation. Through his actions he shows zero remorse and does not seem to care that his treatment of Dewey Dell may even lead her to death. Seeing as this is the only perspective that Faulkner gives us from Jefferson it can be assumed that this is how Faulkner wants the reader to interpret the city’s view of the Bundrens. MacGowan’s treatment of Dewey Dell is arguably the most tragic scene in the novel. It is something that could have only taken place in the city of Jefferson where the distantiation between the two characters is so great that Dewey Dell is unable to see what is happening to her.

Now that this essay has examined all the non-family narrators and their relationship to the Bundrens, it is important to see how it all ties together with the decline of the Bundrens as they reach civilization. In his book *William Faulkner: Seeing Through the South*, John Matthew explains this phenomenon of the Bundrens in a chapter titled “From Rednecks to Riches.” In this chapter, Matthews looks at how the Bundrens’ journey to the city affects their lives. Matthews argues that Bundren are incapable of catching up to the times of modernity (Matthews 143). After having looked at how the Bundrens continue to deteriorate the closer they get to the city, it is understood that they are incapable of remaining a family unit once they reach the city. By the time they finally reach the city, each of the Bundrens has experienced their own tragedy. Addie’s corpse has been drug around for over a week; Anse has lost the respect of both his children and neighbors; Cash has lost his leg; Darl has been sent away; Jewel as lost his horse; Dewey Dell’s pregnancy has not been solved but only complicated; and Vardaman has become delusional. Matthews claims that all of the Bundrens troubles are because of the isolation that Bundrens and

their neighbors have experienced due to farm life and that they are being pressured to change once they hit the city (147). When looking at Matthews' chapter paralleled with Simac and Custred article on modernity's affects on the family, it is possible to conclude that the Bundrens' journey into town became the main source of their deterioration. A popular argument is that it is because of each Bundrens' personal selfishness that they are unable to remain strong family unit. However, when looking at the Simac and Custred article it appears that the closer a family gets to modernization they become more self-interested. Simac and Custred claim that once introduced to modernity, family "values can be seen reflected in a growing de-emphasis" while there is a growing sense in "his or her own particular interest" (Simac and Custred 167). This pattern can be observed in each of the Bundrens the closer they get to Jefferson.

Because of the subjectivity of the Bundrens, and their reluctances to show their own selfish desires in their sections of narrations, it is imperative to look at the non-family narrators to see how the desires and the actions of the Bundrens change as their journey progresses. Through the different forms of distantiation used by both Faulkner, and the characters he creates it becomes possible to see how the Bundrens self-destruct as they final reach Jefferson. Had Faulkner chosen not to include the outside narrators it would have been impossible to see how the Bundrens are viewed by the different social classes, or how their actions appear to those who are not apart of the family. Faulkner's use of distantiation on multiple levels give a more rounded account of how modernization affects the Bundrens and also how it causes them to be perceived by others. Through both geographical and social distantiation it becomes clear that the Bundrens are a family that is incapable of coping with the looming cloud of modernization, therefore, they self-destruct due to their own selfish desire that they attain from coming into contact with modernity.

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